

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

EDITORIAL OFFICE · 17 ROUTE DE MALAGNOU · GENEVA · SWITZERLAND
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No. 45/27th Year

2nd December, 1960.

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Dutch Reformed Clerics Challenge Apartheid

(Johannesburg) - Eleven prominent theologians of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa have published a book describing the South African apartheid policy as contrary to the Gospel and threatening disaster to the country.

The book published in the Afrikaans language used by the descendants of the Dutch settlers is entitled "Delayed Action" because, its authors explain, it appears "late in the day" and calls for a new approach to South Africa's colour problems.

One of the eleven authors, each of whom has contributed a chapter, was Professor B. B. Keet, former head of the theological faculty at the Dutch Reformed Seminary at Stellenbosch University.

He wrote: "It is well known that our Afrikaans churches are in favour of total apartheid, if by this division all groups are given the fullest rights. The fact is, however, that such a division is not possible at this period in our history. The advocates of apartheid have constantly claimed that only their policy is able to save white civilization in South Africa.

"The opposite is true; its fruits, internally as well as externally, have shown clearly that there is no hope for South Africa if black nationalism has to be fought by force. It is my conviction that the time has come for our Afrikaans churches to notify the state that they no longer see their way clear to supporting the apartheid policy, and after that to insist that a better way be sought for the solution of our racial problems.

"Then we must ask, in a friendly way but with deep seriousness, that discussions be arranged between whites and non-whites at the highest level.... and if there is no reaction, the church itself must undertake to do what the state will not do: that is, through mutual discussion to seek a better way."

Another contributor, Dr. J. Stutterheim, said: "One searches the Gospels in vain for any discrimination on the grounds of blood relations or race. The dividing line in the Gospels does not lie between people of different races, but solely between people who do the will of God and people who do not do the will of God."

According to reports, the same opinions as those expressed in the book have been voiced by others in meetings of about 350 ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church held in recent months. An English translation of the book is expected to go on sale in about two weeks.

EPS, Geneva.

Missouri Synod and NCC Discuss Co-operation

(St. Louis, Mo.) - Representatives of the National Lutheran Council (USA) and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have resumed formal conversations on theological issues involved in Lutheran co-operative activities.

Discussions at the second meeting of the two groups centred on "The Significance of Confessional Subscription" dealing with the traditional adherence of Lutheran churches to doctrinal statements contained in the Book of Concord. This volume, compiled in 1580, contains the confessional documents which form the basis for Lutheran teaching and practice.

Following nearly six hours of discussion the 29 conferees issued a statement which said "substantial agreement was reached" in certain areas.

These included: "affirmation of the importance of confessional subscription for the proclamation of the Church; recognition that the heart of the confessions is their witness to the Gospel; acknowledgement that this understanding of the Gospel requires rejection of contradictory understandings; assertion of historical limitations in the confessions; allowance of distinction between the primary norm of the Scriptures and the secondary norm of the Confessions, and designation of the confessions which are involved in subscription."

At the conclusion of the meeting it was announced a third session will be held next August on "What kind of co-operation is possible in view of discussions to date?". The first of these meetings was held last July.

The NLC is a co-operative agency of eight US Lutheran churches with a combined membership of 5,300,000 members. The Missouri Synod, which has more than 2,400,000 communicants, is not affiliated to the National Lutheran Council or any other ecumenical body, although it does co-operate with the NLC in some welfare and relief activities.

EPS, Geneva.

South African Anglican Bishops Denounce Reeves' Deportation

(Capetown) - The twelve bishops of the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa have decided to give deported Bishop of Johannesburg, the Rt. Rev. Ambrose Reeves, £1,000 (\$2,800) a year from their own pockets for as long as he is away from his diocese. Bishop Reeves, deported on September 12, was strongly opposed to the South African Government's apartheid policies.

The Synod adopted a resolution recording its "strong condemnation of the summary and forceful deportation without charge of trial of the Bishop of Johannesburg". It said, "This act against a bishop is regarded of itself as an affront to the Church as a whole and the Church of the Province of South Africa in particular."

EPS, Geneva.

Pope Explains Task of Vatican Council

(Vatican City) - Pope John XXIII has said that the Second Vatican Council in contrast with similar meetings in the past will not be primarily concerned with "correctness of doctrine" or "heresies and errors".

"Today the question is not so much that a particular point of doctrine or discipline needs bringing back to the pure sources of revelation or tradition," the Pontiff said. "Rather it is a question of restoring and emphasizing, in all its splendour, the very substance of human life and thought, and Christian life and thought, for which the Church has been both the trustee and the authority through the centuries".

The Pope, as quoted in L'Osservatore Romano, said he had been gratified by "the respectful attention given by our separated brethren" to the announcement of the Council for "it is like a joyful foretaste of the unity of all those who believe in Jesus Christ".
EPS, Geneva.

Christians Around World Will Study Theme of WCC Third Assembly

EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE
January 1, 1961, or AFTER

(Geneva) - An intensive effort to bring the quest for Christian unity home to local congregations around the world will get underway soon.

The occasion is the publication of the World Council of Churches' preparatory study booklet for the Third Assembly to be held in New Delhi, India, November 18 - December 6, 1961.

During the next year the 76-page booklet, which is liberally illustrated with photographs of the activities of the World Council and its member churches, will be studied by tens of thousands of Christians belonging to the Council's 178 member churches in more than 50 countries.

In small village churches in Asia and Africa, in big city congregations in Berlin and Chicago, men and women will come together to study and discuss the Assembly theme, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World".

The booklet is designed to enlist the participation of the local church in the Assembly. An initial printing of nearly half a million copies in French, English and German will be followed by other language editions for Spanish-speaking, Scandinavian, Asian and African countries. In all, the booklet will be published in more than 20 languages. The total run may reach one million copies.

In the preface Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, explains that the Vigyan Bhavan Hall in New Delhi where the Assembly will be held cannot possibly accommodate the hundreds of thousands of members of churches to whom the brochure will go "in all parts of the world, and in very many languages. But we need your spiritual presence, your personal participation in this event."

The churches meeting in New Delhi, through their chosen delegates, Dr. Visser 't Hooft says, have their "relevance in the local congregation, in the common worship, and the working and living together of individual Christian men and women". Christians often ask "how they can play their part in this new ecumenical movement of our time. Here is one opportunity."

The booklet includes a treatment of the main theme of the Assembly, along with eight Bible studies, and a section on the World Council called "The Local Task in a Total Vision". There is also a section on suggested ways of using the booklet.

Many denominations are planning to send copies to all their ministers. Single copies are US\$0.50, 3s.0d., DM 2.-, Fr.Sw.2.-. Sample copies and information on discount prices for quantity orders are available from : Publications Office, World Council of Churches, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland. EPS, Geneva.

New Zealand Church Asks Recognition of Communist China

(Palmerston, North) - The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand has reiterated its plea that the New Zealand government support diplomatic recognition of the government of Communist China and her admission to the United Nations.

Terming the present situation "farcical", the Assembly stressed that such action would appear to become increasingly urgent and that the United Nations is the framework within which resolution of serious international situations should be sought.

"Only when men are brought face to face, can real communication occur," it declared. EPS, Geneva.

UN Debates Religious Freedom

(United Nations) - A proposed change in the Covenant of Human Rights, which observers believe would have posed a serious threat to religious liberty, was averted last week with the help of church experts on international affairs.

The proposal for the change was made in debate in the United Nations General Assembly by the Saudi Arabia delegation with the support of several Moslem states. The delegation asked the deletion of the section of the Covenant's Article 18 which provides for the right to maintain or change one's religion or belief.

Officials of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, on the scene, sent letters to various delegations and talked with their leaders, many of whom were reported "unaware of the essential nature of the provision".

Following lengthy and complex debate, an alternate proposal was advanced by the Philippines delegation that the text should read, freedom to have a religion or belief of one's choice. This was later amended by the United Kingdom to freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice. This amended version was adopted without dissenting vote.

CCIA officials, the Rev. A. D. Micheli, secretary and Dr. O. F. Nolde, director, said that while the actual wording of the text had been changed "the intent and interpretation remain the same".

The debate came in the continuing work of the UN General Assembly on the Covenant which it hopes one day will become an international treaty. CCIA has insisted since 1946, when the Human Rights Commission was established, that the freedom to change one's religion or belief is an essential of religious liberty. It was largely through the agency's efforts that this provision was incorporated in the Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. CCIA is a joint agency of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. EPS, Geneva.

US Lutherans Study Medical Ethics

(New York) - The United Lutheran Church in America has launched a study of the medical and moral questions concerning birth control, artificial insemination, sterilization, therapeutic abortion and euthanasia.

Entitled "Ethics of Medical Practice", the research project will result in a series of monographs by individual authors designed to "offer guidance to people as they work toward their own conclusions" on the issues.

The possibility of a second full-scale study on another topic - Church-State relations in the United States - is also being investigated by the church. Its Board of Social Missions has authorized a series of consultations to explore the possibility of such a survey. EBS, Geneva.

New Anglican College in Jerusalem

(Jerusalem) - Plans for the establishment of a theological college at Jerusalem have been announced by the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Rev. A.C. MacInnes.

The new institution, which will be called St. George's College, fulfills long standing plans of the Anglican communion to expand its theological study programme in Jerusalem. The college will offer courses in such subjects as archaeology, oecumenism, and Islamics for students, ordinands and graduates. It will be located in buildings owned by the church near the Collegiate Church of St. George the Martyr, Jerusalem. The Anglican church also operates a school in Jerusalem.

Named as first principal of the college has been the Rev. F. V. A. Boyse, vicar of the Guild Church of St. Mary, Abchurch, London. Other staff appointed are the Rev. J. D. Wilkinson, of the faculty of Ely Theological College, who was named Tutor; Canon Kenneth Cragg, noted Islamic scholar; Dr. J. D. Zimmerman, Old Testament scholar; and Canon Edward Every, church historian.

EPS, Geneva.

Unity Means "Back to Christ - Not Rome"

(Stuttgart) - A prominent German Lutheran theologian has emphasized that the road to Christian unity is a "road back - but it is back to Christ and not back to Rome".

"The Biblical allusion to one flock under one shepherd refers only to Christ himself and not to the Pope," Bishop Herman Dietzfelbinger, chairman of the Lutheran World Federation's Commission on Inter-Confessional Research, told a recent meeting in Stuttgart, Germany.

"Luther's ecumenical goal was back to Christ alone, to the Holy Scriptures, to faith and truth," he declared, in contrast to the position of the Roman Catholic Church which "demands distinctly, plainly and clearly the return to Rome (and) refuses to acknowledge that it, too, can be at fault and commit errors".

He added that plans for the Second Vatican (Ecumenical) Council make it "quite clear that Rome understands 'ecumenical' only in the sense of Roman Catholic".

EPS, Geneva.

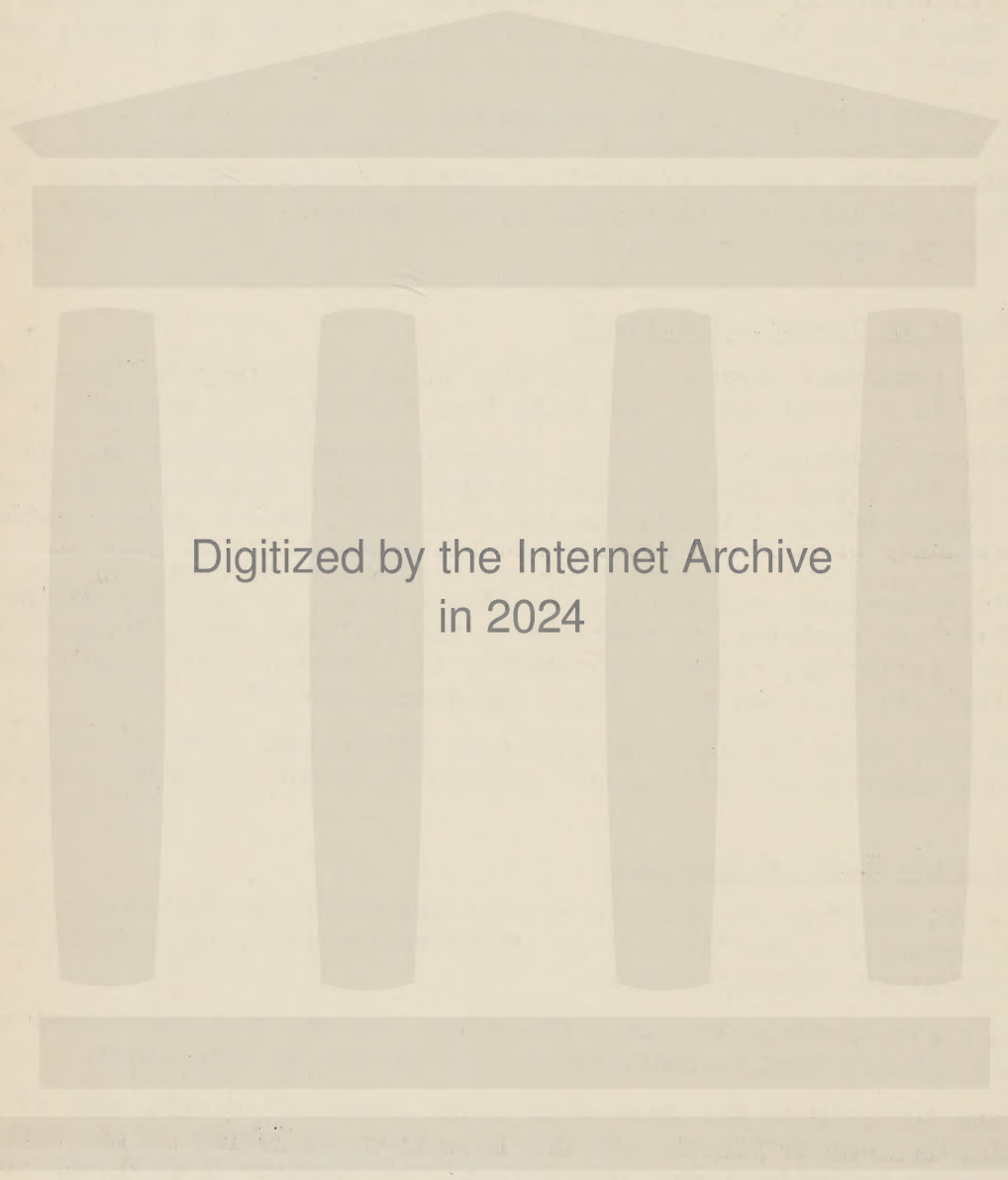
Archbishop of Canterbury in Jerusalem

(Jerusalem) - Dr. Geoffrey Francis Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has completed his visit to Jerusalem - the first stage of the twelve-day journey which has captured the imagination of the Christian world.

It was a visit in the nature of a pilgrimage and one that was marked by gracious cordiality and notably warm demonstrations of affection on both sides.

Everywhere the primate was greeted by large crowds of clergy, many of whom seemed almost in friendly competition to gain his attention, according to one report. There were also numerous individual manifestations of the feeling of unity and affection such as Roman Catholic monks kneeling to kiss his hand. "The Archbishop has clearly been surprised and profoundly moved by his reception and his hosts have been delighted with his friendliness and dignity" said an observer.

The 73-year old Archbishop began his strenuous five-day tour with a visit to St. George's Collegiate Church, an Anglican Cathedral, where he was accompanied in a solemn procession of Orthodox, Armenian and Coptic clergy and about seventeen Roman Catholic priests, Franciscans and White Fathers.



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When he visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he was again met by a host of clergy who escorted him to the candle-lit altar, where he kissed a relic of the Passion and knelt before the Tabernacle. An Armenian Bishop held his right hand and the Franciscan Superior, his left. Later, in procession with the Orthodox, Armenian and Latin Patriarchs, he was escorted on a walk through the city up the Via Dolorosa preceded by footmen who crashed their staves on the pavement to clear the way.

Later Dr. Fisher drove to the Mount of Olives to view the Old City, visited Bethlehem, Rachael's Tomb and other holy places.

In a sermon on Sunday at the Anglican Cathedral, Dr. Fisher said there is blowing through the churches "a great wind, a wind of fellowship in Christ, a wind of the Holy Spirit".

"In many parts of the world and in contact with many churches I have felt that a resurrection is at work," he said. "I pray that my journey... may in some measure give help and encouragement to all who find in the ecumenical movement an authentic voice of the Holy Spirit to the churches of the world."

Through the centuries, he continued, the churches "have allowed themselves to be drawn overmuch into what St. Paul called philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man, after the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.

"Here in Jerusalem, in the first Christian sermon ever preached by mortal man, St. Peter said: 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'

"By that unity of hope and loyalty and faith and baptismal gift all the churches are being drawn, as I believe, into a fresh power of the Resurrection..."

Dr. Fisher left Jerusalem early this week for Istanbul where he will be the guest of His All Holiness, Athenagoras I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church. From there he will proceed to Rome for an audience with Pope John XXIII at the Vatican. (See EPS, No.41.)

EPS, Geneva.

In Brief

Sir Francis Ibiem, chairman of the Provisional Committee of the All-Africa Church Conference, has been named Governor General of East Nigeria. Sir Francis, a medical doctor by profession, is principal of the Hope Waddell Training Institution, Calabar, Nigeria, a secondary high school for 330 boys conducted under the auspices of the Church of Scotland Mission. An active Presbyterian layman, he has been a leader in the ecumenical movement in Africa and internationally.

* *

A ten-year project to publish the "first complete definitive edition" of John Wesley's works has been undertaken jointly by five leading US Methodist seminaries. Dr. Frank Baker of London, secretary of the Wesley Historical Society in England, has been appointed archivist and bibliographer of the work.

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For the first time the Evangelical Church of Cologne, Germany, is giving Protestants opportunity for private confession in the form of "an hour of pastoral care". Twelve pastors from churches in Cologne are taking turns in conducting the "confessional". This hour of pastoral care in a church is based on an "Order of Confession" which provides opportunity for conversation before confession and absolution.

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A sum of about \$10,000 has been raised by Austrian Lutherans in a "Bread for the Hungry" campaign. About \$2,500 of the funds have been turned over to the Lutheran World Federation for its milk distribution centres for Arab refugees in the Holy Land.

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Christian marriage and family life is the subject of a new hymn contest being sponsored by the Hymn Society of America. A Society spokesman said the topic was chosen because of the dearth of hymns which "give expression to the newer concepts of the relation of the Christian faith to sex, love, marriage and parenthood".

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The Religious Society of Friends (USA) has given \$16,000 to the United Nations Technical Assistance programme as "an installment of anonymous Quaker donations from across the country". The contributions were made by Quakers who voluntarily taxed themselves to help the UN. The money will aid projects in Africa.

* *

Three theological colleges in New Zealand have granted free places involving full tuition and board to Asian students for the 1961 academic year. The arrangement has been made through the East Asia Christian Conference, an Asian inter-church body of which New Zealand churches are members. The three colleges are: St. John's Anglican College, Auckland, which is accepting a student from Kobe, Japan; the Baptist College, Auckland, which is accepting a student from Jaffna, Ceylon; and Christchurch College, which is accepting a student from Dacca, East Pakistan.

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Pope John XXIII has decided to postpone a television audience tentatively scheduled for showing in the British Isles on December 1, the eve of his audience with the Archbishop of Canterbury. A British Broadcasting Corporation announcement said the Pope had informed them that he did not wish to take advantage on the eve of Dr. G. Fisher's visit of the increased interest and would "prefer to appear later".

* *

Professor Heinrich Vogel, a prominent German Protestant theologian, who is a member of the evangelical faculty of East Berlin's Humboldt University, has been given the "Fatherland Order of Merit, in Silver", one of the Soviet zone's highest awards. Professor Vogel was commended because his views on peace coincide with those of the government. During World War II, Professor Vogel was a leader of the "confessional wing" of the German Protestant church noted for its strong anti-Nazi stand.

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The legislature of the state of Kerala, India, has decided to exempt religious, charitable and educational institutions from an agrarian reform bill which is designed to establish maximum size of land holdings. The exemption has been strongly opposed by the state's Communist party.

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Ten Indonesian Christian leaders have been invited to New Zealand for a three-week fraternal visit by the National Council of Churches. The visit is the second half of a "get acquainted" exchange initiated earlier this year when a group of 11 New Zealanders visited Indonesia.

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